

AIA ABSTRACT

A USE-ALTERATION ANALYSIS OF BRONZE KITCHENWARES FROM TWO HOUSES IN REGIO I, INSULA 11 AT POMPEII, AND A CONSIDERATION OF THEIR SOCIAL CONTEXT

In this paper, we offer a use-alteration analysis of a selection of Roman bronze vessels for the preparation and provisioning of food and drink from two separate assemblages, the Casa di L. Habonius Primus (I.11.5-8) and the Casa Imperiale (I.11.17), at Pompeii. We systematically examine the morphology of the kitchenwares from a functional point of view in order to reconstruct the life histories of the individual objects. This study sheds light on various types of object-user interaction and the daily practices of two Pompeian households with broader implications for studies of consumption patterns in the Roman world. Our research was conducted as part of the 2018 season of the Pompeii Artifact Life History Project.

Through consultation of archival sources, we attempt to recontextualize the vessels and to determine the frequencies of particular types within the two residences. While both houses are modest in scale, there is significant variation in the size and composition of their bronze kitchenware assemblages. A subset of vessel types is examined, comprised of all vessels which were plausibly used for food preparation or water provisioning, including cookpots, casseroles, cauldrons, and buckets. Due to the intact or nearly intact nature of many of these objects, the assemblages represent a unique opportunity for use alteration analysis, which is most profitably carried out on complete objects. For each object, all forms of surface loss (denting, scratching, chipping, etc.) and surface accretion (principally sooting/fire blackening) are noted and described in detail. Alterations may be intentional, such as the addition of patches to repair holes, or unintentional, such as the inadvertent bending of a rim over time. Patterns among the various forms of use alteration are documented and used to illuminate aspects of the *chaîne opératoire* of the objects.

We demonstrate that bronze, far from being a material resistant to use alteration, is in fact a sensitive indicator of different types of alteration. Reconstructing the life histories of the objects analyzed, we identify distinct consumption habits and food/drink preparation strategies within the two households. We interpret these differences as indicators of both individual taste and the distinct socioeconomic realities of the households.